

THE DIPLOMATIC BACKGROUND OF 1914 75

Franco-Russian camp. The new Chancellor realized as clearly as Metternich, the Ambassador in London, that the challenge to our naval supremacy was poisoning Anglo-German relations, and his first step was to suggest a naval arrangement as part of a general understanding. His sincerity was manifest, but the coupling of a naval agreement with a political formula ruined the scheme. Our proposals for a reduction of the German shipbuilding programme were rejected in Berlin, and the German request for a pledge of neutrality in a European war was declined in London. Bethmann was never master in his own house, for Tirpitz had the ear of his master, and Kiderlen, whom the inexperienced Chancellor had called to the Foreign Office, was a masterful man. The Franco-German agreement of February, 1909, by which Germany recognized the political preponderance of France in Morocco in return for economic co-operation, had been widely welcomed as the liquidation of a dangerous feud; but the goodwill of the Governments was not shared by the firms which struggled for orders and openings. There were disputes about railways, mines and public works ; and meanwhile anarchy in Morocco steadily increased. In May, 1911, the French, believing the European residents to be in danger, sent a force to Fez at the invitation of the Sultan. To the annoyance of France, Spain followed suit in June by occupying the zone assigned to her by the secret Franco-Spanish treaty of 1904, and on July 1 the *Panther*, a German gunboat, anchored in Agadir, a closed port on the Atlantic coast. France, argued the German and Spanish Governments, had broken the spirit if not the letter of the Act of Algeciras, and Grey privately admitted that she was skating on very thin ice. Q[^] oH bK[^] L[^] § 3

Though reiterated warnings had come from
feerlin before
the French column set out for the Moorish
capital, the Agadir
coup was a shock to London and Paris. German
firms in that
district, we were informed, had asked for
protection, and the
vessel would be withdrawn when order in
Morocco was
restored. The establishment of French and
Spanish posts in
various parts of the country, it was explained,
had created a
new situation. Germany was ready to co-operate
with France
and Spain in the search for a solution of the
Morocco question,
and the aid of the British Government in this
task would be
welcomed. Grey replied that Germany's very
abrupt action
had created a new situation; that our
commercial interests
were larger than hers ; that we must
consider our treaty